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NEWS RELEASE

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Wildfire Potential Sparks Health Advisory for Idaho Residents

Above normal fire potential is projected for most of the forested lands in Idaho north of the Snake River Plain for this coming fire season. The Idaho Departments of Health and Welfare and Environmental Quality are warning people of the potentially unhealthy and hazardous air quality conditions that may result from the smoke of wildfires. Idahoans are advised to avoid strenuous exercise in areas when visibility is limited to one mile or less.

“Smoke consists of particles of various sizes, many of which are small enough to be inhaled deep into the respiratory system,” said Kara Stevens, Manager of the Indoor Environment Program for the Department of Health and Welfare. “This can result in serious illness for some individuals.” Stevens advises older adults, small children, and those with respiratory or heart disease problems to limit physical activity, even when visibility is greater than one mile.

Anyone exposed to smoke may not be able to breathe as deeply or vigorously as they normally would, and they may experience symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath. Older adults, children and those with medical conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or congestive heart disease are more affected. Seek medical treatment if you have uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, choking, or if breathing difficulty does not subside indoors.

Air quality updates for many Idaho communities can be found on the web: www.deq.state.id.us/air/air1.htm

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(Editors: Tips for coping with smoke are attached to this Media Advisory. For more information, contact Aaron Swift, IDEQ, at 208-528-2650 or Kara Stevens, IDHW, at 332-7319)